

## STARFISH AWARD NOMINEES

The Wyoming Department of Health would like to acknowledge all of those nominated for the Starfish Thrower Awards.

Richard D. Adriaens	Lester Lavalais	Jessica Ray
Lisa Amos	Douglas Pomroy	Rom Reedy
Sen. Pat Aullman	Tom Musgove	Mary Richard
Sylvia Bagdonas	Terry Myers	Marilyn Riker
John Barrera, BSW	Reverend Clinton Lewis	Hon. Wes Roberts
Robert F. Bragg	Peak Wellness Center	Connie Robinson
Chuck Daum	Jail Diversion Program	Carol Serelson
James W. Demshar	Lew Markley	Dora Shockley
Hon. Robert Denhardt	Washakie Works	Rep. Colin M. Simpson
Nadine Dexter	Ed McCauslan	Dewey Skansberg
Lois Dowell	Brenden McKinney	Melissa Stahley Cummings
Vikkilyn Frank	Terri Moran	Shanell Stanley
Glenna Hedrick	Natrona County Prevention Coalition,	Faith M. Vigil
Teresa Hernandez	Mercer House Inc.	Eileen Wetham
M. Harold Hopkins		Gay Woodhouse
Sherry Hubbard		

A special thanks to Wyoming artist Ken Burns, who created the Starfish Award Trophy

Ken Burns began sculpting and diving at about the same time a little over twenty years ago. His mentor and instructor always urged him to "sculpt what you know and love," so he photographed and sculpted subjects found in the sea. He has been blessed with opportunities to dive in beautiful venues around the globe which have provided him ample inspiration. Ken, a former Wyoming Legislator, and his wife Patti own a sculpture and photography studio at Harriman, Wyoming.

THE WYOMING  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Proudly Presents

## THE 2007 STARFISH THROWER AWARDS



**"I MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THAT ONE"**

September 28, 2007  
Best Western Ramkota Hotel  
Casper, WY

## THE STARFISH THROWER STORY

There are many versions of the Starfish Thrower story; the following is an example of just one.

"I awoke early, as I often did, just before sunrise to walk by the ocean's edge and greet the new day. As I moved through the misty dawn, I focused on a faint, faraway movement. I saw a boy, bending and reaching and waving his arms – dancing on the beach, no doubt in celebration of the perfect day soon to begin.

"As I approached, I sadly realized that he was not dancing, but rather bending to sift through the debris left by the night's tide, stopping now and then to pick up a starfish and then standing, to heave it back into the sea. I asked the boy the purpose of the effort. "The tide has washed the starfish onto the beach and they cannot return to the sea by themselves," he replied. 'When the sun rises, they will die, unless I throw them back to the sea.'

"I looked at the vast expanse of beach, stretching in both directions. Starfish littered the shore in numbers beyond calculation. The hopelessness of the boy's plan became clear to me and I

"He paused briefly to consider my words, bent to pick up a starfish and threw it as far as possible. Turning to me he simply said,

**'I made a difference to that one.'**"

Based in this delightful old story, the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division of the Wyoming Department of Health is proud to host an event to acknowledge those who are working tirelessly to improve the lives of countless persons suffering from mental illness and/or addictions.

Many of us who work "inside" the mental health and substance abuse system have grown weary of the hand-wringing and focusing on failure when we know there are thousands of success stories that need to be told. This event is intended to shine a light on the success

## Select Committee on Mental health and Substance Abuse

In 2005, the legislature created a Select Committee to study the state's mental health and substance abuse services system and to make recommendations for improvement. As a result of the leadership of the Select Committee, several pieces of landmark legislation have been enacted. Members of this committee spend considerable time studying the issue and coming to the understanding that the system needed much more than simply more money. The committee studied the research and science of addiction disease and mental illness and carefully crafted legislation that will move the state toward a regional system of care where all citizens, regardless of where they live, will have access to services.

The Select Committee continues to study these matters and will make recommendations as they monitor and participate in the

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

Solutions for Life

Pathfinder

JHCCC

Curran-Seeley

Cloud Peak Counseling

Wyoming Department of

Corrections

Casper Area Convention and

Visitors Bureau

Mercer House

Southwest Counseling Center

Volunteer of America

Casper Tourism

Hot Springs County Counseling

Peak Wellness Center

Fremont Counseling Services

Carbon County Counseling

Central Wyoming Counseling

EnCana Oil Company

Casey Family Program

Casper Meth Initiative

Marathon Oil Company

Mental Health Block Grant

Substance Abuse Prevention/  
Treatment Block Grant

Special thanks to Dominique Maestas for performing *God Bless America*. Dominique is a 17 year-old student at Kelly Walsh High School and was a finalist in the Youth of the Year Program.

This and future generations of Wyoming children will benefit by the courageous decision Nancy Freudenthal made to speak out for families. For many years, quieter voices have raised concerns about a culture in this state that ignored underage drinking, even encouraged it with the wink of an eye that said, “Kids will be kids and drinking is a part of growing up.”

Nancy challenged that old Wyoming thinking. “Dave and I are convinced that Wyoming can no longer ignore or tolerate childhood drinking. Science tells us that the earlier a child begins to drink, the greater his or her chances of becoming alcohol dependent. We also know that children who abuse alcohol have impaired learning, memory and problem solving abilities. Finally, alcohol use is associated with increased suicides, attempted suicides, violent behavior, crime and risky sexual activity. The most startling fact is that early alcohol use will likely kill or injure more young people than all illegal drugs combined.”

Nancy Freudenthal spent considerable time studying the issue. She spoke out courageously challenging the alcohol industry to improve its practices to reduce sales to children. Nancy challenged communities to look into the mirror and ask whether the use of alcohol had become central to community events, rodeos, fairs, and other gatherings. She put her own credibility on the line, taking the case to the legislature, lobbying them to make changes to reduce youth access, passing open container legislation, passing keg registration laws, improving minor in possession statutes, passing a requirement for ignition interlock devices and repealing insurance policy exclusions for coverage of alcohol-related incidents and more.

Perhaps most importantly, Nancy Freudenthal spoke to parents and youth about their responsibility. As a result of her work, judges, county attorneys, legislators, educators, parents, and others have changed the way they view underage drinking. There is more work to be done and Nancy has challenged us to do it. Wyoming will look back on her time as First Lady and remember it as the turning point when using alcohol was no

#### **Schedule of Events**

6-6:30 pm	Drinks
7:00 pm	Performance by Dominique Maestas and Dinner
8:00 pm	Remarks by Lisa Halpern
8:30 pm	Presentation of Awards by Rodger McDaniel and Dr. Brent Sherard



#### **Lisa Halpern**

As an undergraduate at Duke, Lisa began to isolate herself from other students, but maintained her cognitive abilities and graduated *summa cum laude*. By the time she began attending Harvard's Kennedy School of Government three years later, her cognitive decline became so severe she could not read, write, or perform simple tasks like counting

change. She would walk through Harvard Yard hiding from people who were not there and would talk to herself in class until it became clear that she needed to take a year of medical leave. By that spring, she became an inpatient at a psychiatric hospital, was diagnosed with schizophrenia and depression, and began working hard towards her goal of returning to Harvard. Three months after her hospitalizations, Lisa returned to the Kennedy School and completed her master of public policy with specialization in health care and leadership in the standard two years. Lisa wrote about this journey and a brain rebuilding process she suggests is analogous to healing the body after physical injury in “Brain Training: An Athletic Model for Brain Rehabilitation” (*Psychiatric Services*, 2006).

Today Lisa is director of Vinfen Corporation's Dorchester Bay Recovery Center, a skills-based day program for adults with mental illness and substance abuse that is converting from a professionally run to a peer-run entity. In addition, for the past few years she has served as coordinator, speaker, and trainer for *In Our Own Voice*, a recovery-based consumer speaking program under the auspices of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Prior to these, Lisa worked on a dual diagnosis PACT team, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, the PBS NewsHour with Jim

## STARFISH AWARD WINNERS

### **Person in Recovery from Substance Abuse:**

#### **Lydia Mary Jenkins (Wind River Indian Reservation)**

As a member and elder of the Northern Arapahoe Tribe, Lydia Mary Jenkins has demonstrated a deep commitment to sobriety and healthy living for herself, her many grandchildren, and her entire community. Lydia has been instrumental in engaging fellow Arapahoe community members in substance abuse and mental health healing by sponsoring Native American sweat ceremonies as an adjunct to traditional medical treatment. She is extremely dedicated to preserving both her own health and the health of her community.

### **Person in Recovery from Mental Illness:**

#### **Janeen Heavin (Evanston)**

Janeen Heavin has been a client of the State Hospital since 2001. In that time, she has made remarkable progress in learning to successfully live with schizophrenia and in conquering her addiction issues. Jan is also a valued employee both at the Evanston City Hall, assisting with clerical duties, and as a CNA in a nursing home in the community. Through her hard work and persistence, Jan has managed to turn her life around and is now working to help others as well. She is truly a role model and an example of what a person can accomplish through effective treatment, personal strength, and perseverance.

### **Substance Abuse or Mental Health Advocate:**

#### **Michelle Dirst (Green River)**

Mental health is a very personal issue for the Dirst family. In May 2004, Randy (Michelle's brother) took his own life after a six-year battle with schizophrenia. Since his tragic death, Michelle has committed her life to helping address the issue and remove the stigma through various volunteer programs and in her career. Since February, 2007, Michelle has worked as a legislative analyst for the

## SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Meeting the enormous challenges of mental illness and addiction requires a high level of political leadership. "Denial" is a characteristic attributed to persons who fail to seek help for addiction and mental health problems. "Denial" is also a characteristic of political systems that fail to respond to these problems in their communities. It takes great courage to lead on these matters. Leadership means talking about issues that are deeply personal in families and communities. It means questioning the quality and accountability of existing services. It also means committing yourself to undertaking hours and days of inquiry studying what a quality system should look like and what changes need to be made.

Substance abuse and untreated mental illness are contributing to an overloaded child welfare system, crowded prisons, academic failure, domestic violence, the inability of adults to become self-sufficient, and other costly social problems. Few other states have had the political leadership to recognize that at the heart of these problems is an underfunded mental health and substance abuse services system. Wyoming is blessed to have the political leadership required to respond to these critical issues.

### **Wyoming's First Lady**

#### **Nancy Freudenthal**

Being a First Lady is a unique and special experience in Wyoming. The people of this state have always held First Ladies in great esteem and are quite interested in the person who occupies this unique public office. Serving as First Lady affords a special opportunity to elevate the public's awareness of issues

### **Private Industry:**

#### **Marathon Oil Company**

A few years ago, officials from Marathon Oil Company met with Governor Dave Freudenthal. During the discussion, Wyoming's meth problem came up. Marathon officials offered to help, asking the Governor what their company could do to help. Governor Freudenthal encouraged them to educate their own large work force about the dangers of meth.

Marathon responded by creating an educational program and using it to train their employees. Immediately Marathon employees talked about how helpful it would be for this information to be provided to their families. Marathon took the program to the families where the response included suggestions that the entire community needed to hear the message.

Today, Marathon Oil Company has created a highly effective multi-media program which is used in community events and conferences and at schools across the state to effectively educate entire communities about meth and what citizens can do to meet this drug's challenge. Marathon Oil has set a positive example. Government cannot do it all and Marathon has demonstrated how the private sector can effectively use its considerable influence to advocate for prevention.

When Marathon was nominated for a Starfish Award, we realized we did not have a category that fit very well. But given Marathon's exemplary efforts, the selection committee deter-



Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency. Starting in the fall she will take classes at George Mason University to receive her Master's in International Commerce and Policy.

### **Substance Abuse Professional:**

#### **Dorothy Sackett (Cheyenne)**

Dorothy Sackett has worked in the substance abuse treatment field for 31 years, beginning as a technician in a detox center and working her way up to become a Licensed Addiction Therapist with Peak Wellness Center. She is currently working as a therapist at Transitions, a men's residential treatment center. She has advocated for a more widespread idea of addiction as a disease and has made a profound difference in many lives through not only her clinical work but also through her involvement with the courts and the legal system. Dorothy's work has had a real and lasting impact on the treatment of substance abuse in the state of Wyoming.

### **Mental Health Professional:**

#### **Festi Moon (Casper)**

Having spent nearly two decades serving people with developmental disability and mental health challenges, Festi Moon has worked for the last 14 years as a Case Manager with the developmental disability Medicaid waivers for both adults and children. Festi is a tireless advocate of collaborative care and always does her best to assure that clients receive the best and most comprehensive services available. Her willingness to cooperate with various agencies and providers has been of enormous value to the people she has helped, both through the state and as the founder of Purposeful People, inc. Festi's dedication, her optimism, and her willingness to get involved have improved the

### **Youth:**

#### **Breanna Sorensen (Cheyenne)**

At 16, Breanna has already had to overcome a lot, and she has done



so with grace and fortitude. Both of Breanna's parents suffered from substance abuse disorders and this made growing up a challenge. Still, she is proud to live her life drug and alcohol-free. She has become an advocate for other young people who make the same choice and has spread the message that "It's OK to not mess up your life and the lives of your family and friends. It's OK to just be the real you." Breanna has two younger half sisters for whom she is a support and a role model. She is succeeding in life substance-free and is making it

**Family or Parent in Recovery:**  
**Carla Young (Cheyenne)**

Carla has been sober for four years and has succeeded in making many positive and profound changes to her life. She is employed full time, owns her own home, and, most significantly, has regained full custody of her three sons, who are doing well in school. Carla is responsible for her own recovery, attending weekly Narcotics Anonymous meetings, maintaining membership in Christians Associated in Recovery, and promoting and representing the Climb Wyoming Program. Carla's children are doing well in school and, as a mother and a mentor, she has

**Public Servant:**  
**Rep. Doug Osborn (Buffalo)**

In his years serving in the Wyoming House, Doug Osborn has had an enormous impact on the way substance abuse services are delivered in this state. He wrote the state's drug court legislation and guided it through the legislature, creating a drug court program that is the envy of many states. He traveled the state, speaking with judges, law enforcement, and addicts both in and out of treatment. He was also the author of House Bill 59 and other landmark substance abuse legislation. Through his considerable effort, Representative Osborn helped Wyoming get a handle on its methamphetamine problem and changed the way substance abuse is dealt with throughout the state. His work has had a huge positive impact on many lives,

**Substance Abuse or Mental Health Program:**  
**Curran-Seeley Hispanic Treatment Program (Teton County)**

Curran-Seeley's Spanish language program began several years ago in response to the ever increasing need for bi-lingual substance abuse treatment services. For most of these years, the needs were met through the use of interpreters. In 2006, Curran-Seeley hired a full-time Spanish therapist to serve its clients' needs with the assistance of a generous grant from the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole. Today, clinician Daniela Peterson, a licensed professional counselor with Curran-Seeley, provides Spanish speaking clients of Teton County and surrounding areas with substance abuse evaluations and treatment services including DUI classes, education, violence prevention programs, and aftercare. Daniela's presence has allowed Curran-Seeley to provide Spanish language

**Community Coalition:**  
**Casper Meth Initiative (Casper)**

October 10, 2003 was a defining point of time in Casper's efforts to address its methamphetamine problem. On that day, a drug investigation discovered a clandestine methamphetamine lab across the street from an elementary school. The school was evacuated due to the extreme toxicity of methamphetamine production. Shortly afterward, approximately forty professionals and community leaders were invited to the police department for a luncheon concerning the impact of methamphetamine on the community. Out of this came the Casper Meth Initiative.

Since that time, the Casper Meth Initiative has worked to establish and improve many programs and efforts aimed at addressing and preventing methamphetamine use, including the Annual Methamphetamine Conference, Meth Watch, the Know Before you Move program, Safe Havens, promoting workplace drug testing and expanding the drug courts. The Casper Meth Watch has helped to mitigate and prevent a great deal of substance-related suffering, and has done a lot to im-